

**SUMMARY OF THE
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 10, 2000**

The Proficiency Testing (PT) Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference, on Tuesday, October 10, 2000. The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Barbara Burmeister of the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the working group reports from the PT Subcommittee for Implementation Issues, the definition of "method," and the status of the method codes update.*

INTRODUCTION

Ms. Burmeister reviewed the minutes from the teleconference on September 26, 2000. The committee agreed that the minutes are final. The status of the Action Items is as follows:

- C Ms. Barbara Burmeister has not yet responded to Ms. Reenie Parris about the Chapter 2 requirements for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (from 8/15/00 teleconference).
- C Ms. Burmeister sent a recommendation to Ms. Jeanne Hankins about the PT requirements for Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) methods. After it is reviewed, Ms. Hankins will send it to the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) Accrediting Authority Group.
- C Ms. Burmeister is in the process of responding to comments received from Ms. Jeri Long, Mr. Steve Nackord, and the Quality Systems Microbiology Subcommittee.
- C Mr. Chuck Wibby finalized the PT Fields of Testing Errata Sheet and sent it to Ms. Burmeister.
- C Ms. Burmeister forwarded the PT Fields of Testing Errata Sheet to Ms. Hankins and all PT providers.
- C Ms. RaeAnn Haynes has not yet drafted a definition for "method." She will continue to work on this. In addition, Ms. Burmeister has asked the Program Policy and Structure Committee to do the same.
- C Ms. Burmeister responded to the Program Policy and Structure Committee's decision not to accredit by "analyte group."
- C Ms. Burmeister has not yet asked the PT Subcommittee for Implementation Issues to provide handouts of their recommendations at the Sixth NELAC Interim Meeting (NELAC 6i) PT session. The status of each of the subcommittee working groups is discussed below.

PT SUBCOMMITTEE FOR IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Each of the subcommittee working groups was asked to submit a report to the PT Committee with recommendations for improving the standards. These are discussed below.

Reporting Format

The Working Group for Data Reporting Issues, chaired by Mr. Bill Hahn, submitted proposed changes to Chapter 2, Sections 2.6 and B.5 of the NELAC Standard. The intent of the group was to produce a list of parameters, which, if included in the PT reports would assist the laboratories and the accrediting authorities in interpreting the data.

Section 2.6 Evaluation of Proficiency Testing Results

Section 2.6 (fourth sentence) currently reads:

The PT Provider shall provide the participant laboratories and the Primary Accrediting Authority a report showing at a minimum the laboratory's reported value, the assigned value, the acceptance range, the acceptable/not acceptable status, and the method for each analyte reported by the laboratory.

The working group proposed the following to replace the above sentence:

The PT Provider shall provide the participant laboratories and the Primary Accrediting Authority a report showing at a minimum:

1. All parameters as listed in the USEPA Criteria Document, Criteria for Individual Laboratory Evaluation Report (Water Supply Program), Criteria for Individual Permittee Evaluation Report (Discharge Monitoring Report Quality Assurance Program), Criteria for Individual Laboratory Evaluation Report (Water Pollution Program).
2. State ID or USEPA ID, if applicable, in the header or cover page.
3. Date started/ended (evaluation date is in the USEPA Criteria Document), in the header or cover page.
4. Date of re-evaluation, if applicable, in the header or cover page.
5. Name and address of the laboratory under test and the contact person for certification purposes, in the header or cover page.
6. An indication of "Not Reported" when a parameter within a PT sample is left blank.
7. An indication of where the report ends, or Page # of Page # to indicate completeness of report.

The PT Committee generally agreed with these proposed changes. However, they suggested that all criteria be incorporated into the standard (referring to item #1) because the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Criteria Document has been difficult to obtain. (Ms. Burmeister noted that Mr. Ray Wesselman at EPA is the contact for obtaining a copy.) Ms. Cindy Nettrour and Ms. Marykay Steinman will take the committee's suggestion back to the workgroup.

Other comments from committee members included a preference for latitude/longitude rather than address and a concern about the format of electronic data files (extra rows, order of fields, etc.).

B.5 Data Reporting by PT Providers

The current language in Section B.5 (last sentence) is as follows:

Providers shall supply PT data to Primary Accrediting Authorities, as per Section 2.6, in a format acceptable to the Primary Accrediting Authority.

The workgroup agreed that this language should be changed, but have not agreed on a solution.

Some proposed language is:

Providers shall supply PT data to Primary Accrediting Authorities, as per Section 2.6, as well as making available electronic files in the format described in the USEPA Criteria Document.

Ms. Burmeister stated that she plans to open this for discussion during the committee's session at NELAC 6i. One participant also noted that the proposed language limits electronic files to the EPA format only.

Quick Response/Corrective Action Studies

The Working Group for Quick Response/Corrective Action Studies submitted revised language for Sections 2.7.3 (Supplemental Studies). They also proposed three new subsections to describe supplemental studies for initial accreditation of a laboratory, demonstrating correction action, and expanding an accredited laboratory's scope of accreditation. (Language for Chapter 4, Section 4.1.4, Proficiency Testing Samples, was also included in the revisions in order to reference the proposed language in Chapter 2.)

The committee discussed the proposed language, and agreed that much of it is superfluous and repetitive of language in the current Section 2.7.2 (Initial and Continuing Accreditation) and Section 2.7.3. Ms. Burmeister pointed out that under normal circumstances, the standards are not eligible for revision for three years after adoption, according to NELAC's Policy on Revision of Standards. As such, simply reorganizing the standards for clarity is not feasible. However, the committee did find some of the suggested material valuable, and assembled alternate proposed language for Section 2.7.3.

Section 2.7.3 currently reads:

A laboratory may elect to participate in PT studies more frequently than required by the semiannual schedule. This may be desirable, for example, when a laboratory first applies for accreditation or when a laboratory fails a study and wishes to quickly re-establish its history of successful performance. These additional studies are not distinguished from the routinely scheduled studies; that is, they shall be reported and are counted and scored the same way and shall be analyzed at least 30 calendar days apart from the conclusion of one study to the shipment date of another study.

The committee will propose to add the following language at the end of the current Section 2.7.3:

A laboratory that is out of compliance with the PT requirement may choose to participate in a supplemental PT study for demonstrating corrective action. PT samples from previously released NELAC compliant PT studies may be used as corrective action PT

studies. The PT Provider shall not supply the laboratory with a sample that has previously been sent to the laboratory. The results of the corrective action PT study shall count as an additional PT study and shall not affect the semi-annual schedule.

As part of this discussion, the committee also agreed that PT samples for initial accreditation or supplemental testing can be obtained from different PT Providers. The key is that the studies must be at least 30 calendar days apart.

Data Reporting Issues

No report was received from the working group on data reporting issues.

FIELDS OF TESTING DISCUSSION (INPUT FOR CHAPTER 1)

Definition of Method

The Program Policy and Structure Committee will meet tomorrow (October 11, 2000) and will discuss the PT Committee's request for a definition of "method" at that time. Ms. RaeAnn Haynes, who volunteered to try to draft a definition as well, said that she has been unsuccessful so far. She will continue to work on it. This topic will be tabled until the committee's next teleconference on October 24, 2000.

METHOD CODES

Mr. Ralph Obenauf provided an update on method codes. He said that he had contacted Mr. Tom Coyner at Analytical Products Group, Inc. (APG) and found out that the PT Committee cannot use APG's database for obtaining the method codes. Therefore, Mr. Obenauf and Mr. Chuck Wibby will assemble the information themselves and try to have it ready by NELAC 6i.

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS RECEIVED

Comment was received from Dr. Mike Miller suggesting that each PT subcategory (e.g., minerals, general chemistry, VOA, BN/pesticides) used by the PT Provider be listed alphabetically. He added that if the parameters are listed under a method, they should also be listed alphabetically. He said that the PT reports are all very different and difficult to manually enter into the state databases. A committee member responded by saying that NELAC cannot require alphabetical order because not all computerized systems will alphabetize organic compounds in a similar fashion.

A philosophical question was received from Mr. Coyner. He had asked why the PT providers are required to implement changes for NELAC immediately, when the accrediting authorities are not required to implement changes for one year. The committee responded that accrediting authorities often have to wait for changes in state regulations in order to implement changes. Therefore, NELAC had to allow them a full year to implement changes. PT providers do not have the same kinds of limitations.

MEMBERSHIP AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE UPDATE

Ms. Cindy Nettrour said that there is no update from the Membership and Outreach Committee.

EPA/NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY (NIST) ITEMS

There were no EPA/NIST items to discuss.

MISCELLANEOUS

The next committee teleconference is scheduled for October 24, 2000, from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 10, 2000

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Ms. Barbara Burmeister will respond to Ms. Reenie Parris about the Chapter 2 requirements for NIST.	
2.	Ms. Cindy Nettrour and Ms. Marykay Steinman will respond to the Working Group for Data Reporting Issues and relay the committee's suggestions for their proposal.	
3.	Ms. Barb Burmeister will respond to Dr. Mike Miller's and Mr. Tom Coyner's comments.	
4.	Ms. Burmeister will respond to the Working Group for Quick Response/Corrective Action Studies with alternate language for their proposal.	
5.	Ms. RaeAnn Haynes will continue to work on a definition for "method."	
6.	Mr. Obenauf & Mr. Wibby will assemble method codes for discussion at NELAC 6i.	

**PARTICIPANTS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 10, 2000**

Name	Affiliation	Address
Burmeister, Barbara Chair	Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene	T: (608) 265-1100, ext. 107 F: (608) 265-1111 E: burmie@mail.slh.wisc.edu
Autry, Lara	USEPA/OAQPS	T: (919) 541-5544 F: (919) 541-2357 E: autry.lara@epa.gov
Caruso, Matthew	NY State Dept. of Health	T: (518) 485-5570 F: (518) 485-5568 E: caruso@wadsworth.org
Haynes, RaeAnn	Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality	T: (503) 229-5983 F: (503) 229-6924 E: haynes.raeann@deq.state.or.us
Jackson, Larry (absent)	Environmental Quality Management, NH	T: (603) 924-6852 F: (603) 924-6346 E: lpjackson@msn.com
Mudambi, Anand	US Army Corps of Engineers	T: (703) 603-8796 F: (703) 603-9112 E: mudambi.anand@epa.gov
Nettrour, Cindy	American Water Works Services Co., Inc.	T: (618) 239-0516 F: (618) 235-6349 E: cnettrou@bellevillelab.com
Obenauf, Ralph	SPEX CertiPrep, Inc.	T: (732) 549-7144 F: (732) 603-9647 E: robenauf@spexcsp.com
Parker, Faust (absent)	PBS&J Environmental Toxicology Laboratory	T: (713) 977-1500 F: (713) 977-9233 E: frparker@pbsj.com
Rhyne, Anne Board Liaison (absent)	TX Nat. Res. Conserv. Comm.	T: (512) 239-1291 F: (512) 239-2550 E: arhyne@tnrcc.state.tx.us
Steinman, Marykay	M. J. Reider Associates, Inc.	T: (610) 374-5129 F: (610) 374-7234 E: kaymjrqaqc@aol.com
Lloyd, Jennifer (contractor support)	Research Triangle Institute	T: (919) 541-5942 F: (919) 541-8830 E: jml@rti.org